

March 2, 2023

Greetings Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Paul Crnkovic, I am a New Haven Resident and former member of New Haven Works. I am here to testify in support of New Haven Works. I'd like to request that the committee consider increasing funding to support the New Haven Works jobs pipeline.

After being released from 10 years in prison, I needed work. For six years I worked low-paying jobs that didn't give any benefits whatsoever. I would work 70 hours a week doing backbreaking labor and was barely able to make ends meet. I needed a change. This is when a friend of mine told me about New Haven Works. I came in ready to do what was necessary to change my life but did not expect all of the help I received. My job coach helped me with my resume, gave me job recommendations, and prepared me for my interviews. I was given the tools I needed to apply for jobs and everything they sent me was the truth. I never felt like I was getting the runaround.

With my job coach's help, I was hired by the New Haven Department of Parks and Recreation as a caretaker. I care for our city's parks by doing things like taking out the trash, but I also help set up the public events that happen around the city like our concerts. I make sure that visitors get a great first impression of New Haven. After two years in the department, I received a promotion to foreman.

When I first got the job, I just felt relieved. I can put food on the table for my 15-year-old son and girlfriend, buy myself a car, and now have a pension and healthcare. As far as I'm concerned, my life is second to none today. If I didn't go through the process with New Haven Works, I would still be struggling. This program showed me a light at the end of a tunnel that I did not have before.

I am now 23 years sober and whenever I meet people who are trying to get their life together, I tell them about New Haven Works so they can make their lives better as I did. A few of the other guys I knew while in prison got hired to good jobs as well, and I know that I am living proof that this place works. Please consider increasing funding for the New Haven Works Pipeline. Thank you for your time and consideration.